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THE VOYAGES

OF THE

VENETIAN BROTHERS ZENO

TO THE NORTHERN SEAS IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

BY

RICHARD HENRY MAJOR, F.S.A.

CARTA DA NAVEGAR DE NICOLO ET ANTONIO ZENI FURONO IN TRAMONTANA LANO·M·CCC·LXXX·
TRAMONTANA
CROLANDIA
ENGRONELANT
Mare et terre incognite
ISLANDA
NORVEGIA
SVECIA
GOCIA
DANIA
LEVANTE
PONENTE
ESTIAND
ICARIA
FRISLAND
ESTOTILAND
PODALIDA
SCOCIA
OSTRO
DROGEO
S. Tomas
Zenobium
Trons
Tronlo
Stat.
Bergen
Sorand
Monaco
Lonibies

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RICHARD HENRY MAJOR, F.S.A.

BOSTON
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1875

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PREFATORY NOTE.

At a meeting of the Massachusetts Historical Society, on the 8th of October, 1874, Mr. Charles Deane, the Recording Secretary, communicated the following paper from the pen of a Corresponding Member, Richard Henry Major, F.S.A., which is explained in a letter previously received from the President of the Society, the Hon. Robert C. Winthrop, dated Wilbad, Würtemberg, 22 August, 1874. "While I was in London," he says, "I spent an hour or two at the British Museum, in conversation with our Corresponding Member, Mr. Major, on the subject of his recent researches into the *pre-historic* voyages to America (if I may so speak). I assured him that our Society would be most glad to have a communication from him, giving a *résumé* of the results at which he had arrived. Since I wrote you last I have received an interesting paper from him, 'On the Voyages of the Venetian Brothers Zeno to the Northern Seas, in the Fourteenth Century.' I have read it cursorily, and have, fortunately, found a private hand for sending it across the Atlantic. It will reach you safely, I trust, about a month hence,—certainly in time for the October meeting." A note from Mr. Major to Mr. Winthrop, dated British Museum, August 6, 1874, accompanied the above letter, in which Mr. Major says: "Herewith I have the pleasure to send you the fulfilment of your request and of my promise."

The accompanying map is a facsimile, by the heliotype process, of an original map belonging to a copy of the Zeno narrative published in 1558, in the library of the late John Carter Brown of Providence.

ON THE VOYAGES OF THE VENETIAN BROTHERS ZENO TO THE NORTHERN SEAS IN THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

In this utilitarian age, it may, at first sight, appear to some that the geography transmitted to us from ages long gone by is of no further use than to amuse the leisure moments of a *dilettante;* and, if it could be shown that all the valuable researches of the past had been duly recognized and incorporated into the geography of to-day, such a supposition would be perfectly correct. It has, however, fallen to my own lot, amongst others, to give some practical proofs that such is not the case. By means of research, of analysis, comparison, and digestion, we have gained a knowledge, in these later days, of startling facts which held no place whatever in the minds or in the current literature of our immediate forefathers.

It is only recently that I have laid before the world the fact, that three hundred years ago the two great equatorial lakes, Victoria Nyanza and Albert Nyanza, with their probable southern feeder, Lake Tanganyika, made known to us in recent years by our noble explorers, Burton and Speke and Grant and Sir Samuel Baker, were already laid down on a map from information gathered by a Portuguese during nine months' residence in Congo.

It is only recently that it has been shown that the east and west coasts of Australia were discovered and laid down on maps about the middle of the reign of Henry the VIII.; and it is only within the last two years that I have been able to show that those discoveries were, to all appearance, made by the men of Provence.

I might add the remarkable fact that, in the account published by the Hakluyt Society of Drake's circumnavigation of the world in 1578, in which he discovered California, and named it Nova Albion, we meet with these very notable words: "There is no part of earth here to bee taken up, wherein there is not some speciall likelihood of gold or silver;" and yet, as we know, the great discovery of gold in California, of which these words ought to have been the harbinger, was not made till 1848, — two hundred and seventy years later.

It is only comparatively recently that any satisfactory light has been thrown upon the colonization of America by northmen as far back as the very commencement of the present millennium; and it is

only within the last twelvemonth that I have been able to demonstrate, in a volume which I edited for the Hakluyt Society, that, so late as a hundred years before Columbus crossed the Atlantic, the survivors of those colonists still existed in America, and were in the habit of importing from Greenland furs and brimstone and pitch, and, moreover, that a Venetian at that early period was in a position to send home a report of these facts to his fellow-citizens in Venice. It is upon this subject, so interesting to all Americans, that I propose now to say a few words. It is a subject which would have been matter of world-wide notoriety long ago, had it not been surrounded by a host of complications and difficulties which have baffled both friends and foes alike, and led the learned John Pinkerton, in his "History of Scotland," to say that "the book was one of the most puzzling in the whole circle of literature." Every one of its puzzles has now been solved; but, as the details of the solution occupy a hundred pages of introduction to my Hakluyt volume, it is obvious that those details must be here omitted, and I must content myself with giving an abstract of the narrative, the grounds of disbelief in it, and a general statement of my own arguments on the other side.

The story, in brief, is as follows: —

Towards the close of the fourteenth century Niccolò Zeno, a member of one of the noblest and most ancient families in Venice, went, at his own expense, on a voyage, rather of curiosity than discovery, into the northern seas. For a long series of years before his time the Flanders voyage from Venice had been a matter of almost annual occurrence, but chance gave to this voyage a very peculiar interest. Niccolò Zeno was wrecked on what he describes as the Island of Frislanda (which, not only by the correspondence of names, but also by a route described in the narrative, I have been able to prove to be the Faroe group); and he and his companions were rescued from the wreckers by the chief of a neighbouring principality, named Zichmni, who happened to be there, and into whose service he entered in the capacity of pilot of his fleet. After remaining with this chieftain some time, during which is recorded the conquest of Frislanda by Zichmni, Niccolò Zeno wrote home to his brother Antonio, inviting him to join him, which he did. Niccolò survived his brother's arrival four years, and died in Frislanda. Antonio remained ten years more in the service of Zichmni, and then returned to Venice, where he died. It is from the above-mentioned letter of Niccolò to Antonio, and subsequent letters from Antonio to a third brother, Carlo (a very distinguished man in Venetian history), that the narrative of the movements of the two brothers is derived. After Antonio's arrival, the two brothers accompanied Zichmni in a victorious attack on what can be clearly shown to be the Shetland group, although named Eslanda. The narrative, however, fortunately treats at greater length on two much more important subjects; viz., a visit by Niccolò Zeno to Greenland, which he calls Engroneland, and the observations of some fishermen in two parts of North America, called respectively Estotiland and Drogio, showing the existence at that period, more than a century before the time of Columbus, of the

remains of those old Scandinavian colonists mentioned by Adam of Bremen in the eleventh, and Ordericus Vitalis, in the twelfth century, and about whom we have learned so much in the present century from the Danish antiquaries C. C. Rafn and others. The whole story had been written out by Antonio Zeno; but a descendant of his, named Niccolò Zeno, born in 1515, when a boy, not knowing the value of these papers, tore them up; but, some of the letters surviving, he was able from them subsequently to compile the narrative and publish it, as we now have it, in the year 1558. He found also in the palace a map, rotten with age, illustrative of the voyages. Of this he made a copy, unluckily supplying, from his own reading of the narrative, what he thought was requisite for its illustration. As, however, in almost every case where a locality was mentioned in the text, he read it mistakenly and transported his own misapprehensions to the face of the map, it is clear that he introduced into a publication difficult of comprehension from its remote date and other causes a fertile source of fresh difficulties and complications. The reader will be prepared to suppose that, in geographical descriptions or delineations of the fourteenth century, we ought not to look for such severe accuracy as might be expected in the geography of to-day. But if, in addition to this defect, we have the names of persons and places spelled, not in their normal fashion, but as a Southerner would write them down after receiving them by the ear from the tongues of Northmen, it is obvious that the sources of error and misconception become reduplicated; but if, in addition to all these, exaggeration of the most preposterous kind has been employed in the original description of the events, we have a most serious additional cause of misconception and perplexity. Till now, these respective facts, which are all exhibited in the Zeno narrative, have been undetected; and so mischievous have they been to the credit of the story that it has been pronounced a tissue of fiction, and, even so late as last year, the learned Professor Conrad Maurer declared it to be a compilation by Niccolò Zeno, junior, who edited it in 1558. In the detection of these various realities, I had made a considerable advance towards the perception of the truth with respect to this venerable and important old document; but I might never have succeeded, had it not been that Johann Reinhold Forster, the distinguished companion of Captain Cook, had already, in 1784, made the valuable suggestion that "Zichmni" was the Southerner's mode of writing "Sinclair;" Henry Sinclair being at the time in question Earl of Orkney and Caithness, and every circumstance, geographical, political, and historical, which close critical observation and research have enabled me to develop out of the story, has shown beyond all doubt that he was right. I need only mention one very curious fact which I lighted on in the "Orcades" of Torfæus, which sets at rest three different perplexities at one stroke. In the Zeno narrative, we have the following exaggerated statement: "With much warlike preparation they went out to attack Estlanda [Shetland], which lies off the coast between Frislanda and Norway: here they did much damage, but, hearing that the king of Norway was coming against them with a great

fleet to draw them off from this attack, they departed under such a terrible gale of wind that they were driven upon certain shoals, and a good many of their ships were wrecked. The king of Norway's fleet, being caught in the same storm, was utterly wrecked and lost in these seas. When Zichmni received tidings of this from one of the enemy's ships that was driven by chance upon Grislanda, he repaired his fleet, and, perceiving that the Shetlands lay not far off to the northward, determined to make an attack upon Islanda [or Shetland], which together with the rest, was subject to the king of Norway. Here, however, he found the country so well fortified and defended that his fleet, being but small and very ill-appointed both with weapons and men, he was fain to give up that enterprise without effecting any thing, but removed his attack to the other islands in those channels which are called Islande [or the Shetlands], which are seven in number; viz., Talas, Broas, Iscant, Trans, Inimant, Dambere, and Bres; and, having taken them all, he built a fort in Bres, where he left Messire Niccolò with some small vessels and men and stores."

Now we can scarcely suppose the king of Norway to have acted in person in such a movement as that above described, or that his whole fleet was wrecked, and yet so notable an event be unrecorded in history. Nor is it easy to believe that Sinclair was really in arms against the king of Norway, from whom, as we shall presently see, he held his earldom. But, as elsewhere in the story in the description of a victorious progress by Zichmni through the Faroe Islands, we have an example of the most preposterous exaggeration, so we may assume that that use of hyperbole so common amongst southern nations has been resorted to here. Now what are the facts? Henry Sinclair's earldom had come into the family by the marriage of his father, Sir William Sinclair of Roslyn, with Isabelle, daughter and coheiress of Malise, Earl of Strathearn, Caithness, and Orkney. The last Scandinavian Jarl was Magnus, the father of Malise's first wife. In 1379, Henry Sinclair received from the king of Norway the recognition of his claim to the earldom, but his investiture was burdened with severe conditions. In the "Orcades" of Torfæus, pp. 174–177, we have Sinclair's own declaration of fealty to the king of Norway, in which his pledges to keep these conditions are fully detailed. But in that document occurs the following passage: "We also promise that, since we have been already promoted by our lord the king to the earldom and lordship aforesaid, our cousin Malise Sperre must cease from his claim, and altogether lay aside his very claim itself to the said lands and islands, so that our lord the king, his heirs and successors, shall endure no vexation or annoyance from him or his heirs." Then on page 178 of Torfæus occurs the following entry: "In the year 1391, the Earl of Orkney slew Malise Sperre in Shetland, with seven others." Now that Estlanda, the scene of the conflict in the Zeno narrative, is Shetland, there can be no doubt, from its position between Frislanda (the Faroe Islands) and Norway, and Shetland formed part of Sinclair's earldom disputed by Malise Sperre, his Norse cousin. Can there then be any doubt that, in the incident recorded, Sinclair was taking posses-

sion *de facto* of that which he already possessed *de jure*, while his contest with his Norse rival would easily bear to Zeno's southern intelligence the aspect of a conflict with Norway. But if hyperbole in description be added to this misconception, we see how abundant a source of perplexity is presented to the reader. No sooner, however, do we gain possession of the above explanatory facts, than we find harmony introduced where before all was discord in every sense, geographically, historically, politically, and chronologically: geographically, for, whereas Niccolò Zeno, junior, had blunderingly transplanted the names cited in the narrative as belonging to Islande (Shetland), to the east coast of Iceland (Islanda), the new explanation brings them back to their right place; historically, for Zichmni is recognizable as "Sinclair" vindicating his lawful claims; politically, for, by the recognition of the unquestionable use of hyperbole by Zeno, the absurd and impossible contest of Sinclair with the king of Norway is shown to be merely a contest with his Norse cousin; chronologically, for whereas, both in the Zeno narrative and map, the date of 1380 is given as the period of the elder Niccolò Zeno's first going out, while in an unpublished MS. in Venice 1390 is given as the date by the younger Niccolò, who was the author of the other date also, we have in the event recorded by Torfæus a proof that 1390, and not 1380, was of the two the correct date, and this date is also in accordance with the historical facts recorded in the Venetian annals with reference to the elder Niccolò, while that of 1380 would not be so.

Another argument which I offer in proof of the authenticity of the document is that, if the narrative and map presented to us in 1558 by Niccolò Zeno, junior, had been a compilation by him from Northern documents, we should have received the names from him in their true Northern shape as he would have copied them, whereas their distortion is the evident result of their having been taken in from Northern lips by the ear of a Southerner, and written down in his own manner. It is to be observed, moreover, that, while this fact is in accordance with the statement of the editor (who stood so high in the republic that he was one of the Council of Ten) that he put together the narrative from the residue of the letters which, in his boyhood, he had torn up, we do not find that he issues the volume with any claim for great distinction on its behalf in those directions which we can now see that it is entitled to. He merely puts it forth as one more instance of the courage and enterprise of his ancestors. On the other hand, it has been urged against the authenticity of the document that, if it had been genuine, it would not have been withheld so long from public notice at a time when the world's attention was so strongly excited by the recent discovery of America. There could not be a greater mistake. Whatever part of America may be referred to in the fisherman's story, of which I shall presently give an abstract from the Zeno narrative, it was in no sense connected by Niccolò Zeno junior's ancestors with the idea of a trans-Atlantic world, for it had been only regarded as a continuation of Europe. We could ask for no better proof that his parents did not attach this extreme value to these papers, than the fact that they did

not secure them from being torn up by a child; and it is clear that neither then nor afterwards could they communicate to him what they had no idea of themselves. Comparatively unimportant, however, as these papers would therefore, in this sense, be to them, it is more easy of belief and most natural that Niccolò's father or grandfather should have received from a cousin, the descendant of Carlo, the brother of the two ancient voyagers, the letters descriptive of the exploits of his own direct ancestors, which had been addressed by one of the two to the said Carlo.

Such are a few of the objections which have been raised against the authenticity of the story, and my answers to them. I will now content myself with adding one argument which I hold to be unanswerably demonstrative of its genuineness. The book and its accompanying map both come to us from one person, Niccolò Zeno, junior. On the map, as I have already stated, are blunders of the most preposterous kind, and these blunders always occur with reference to those localities which happen to be mentioned by name in the text. In any or all of these cases, however, when we take the language of the text and bring it into collation with our geographical knowledge of to-day, we find that it is perfectly right. The map alone is ridiculously wrong, which shows that the errors arise from the misreading of the text by Niccolò Zeno, junior, and the transference of his misconceptions to the map which he endeavored to reconstruct from the old map "rotten with age." While this is a proof of his ignorance of the geography (and small blame to him, when we consider the period at which he lived), it is the greatest proof that could be desired that he could not possibly have been the ingenious concoctor of a narrative, the demonstrable correctness of which, when checked by modern geography, he could thus ignorantly distort upon the face of a map.

Having thus, as I hope, established the genuineness of the document, I will proceed to show in what its interest consists.

After the affair in Shetland, Earl Sinclair left Niccolò Zeno in a fort which he had built at Bressay, with some small vessels, and men, and stores; and, in the following summer, Zeno resolved to try his fortune in a voyage of discovery. He fitted out three small barks in the month of July, and, sailing north, arrived in Engroneland or Greenland.

Here he found a monastery of Friars Preachers, and a church of St. Thomas, close by a volcanic hill. There was also a hot-water spring, which the monks used for heating the church and the entire monastery, and by which they cooked their meat and baked their bread. By a judicious use of this hot water, they raised in their small covered gardens the flowers, fruits, and herbs of more temperate climates, thereby gaining much respect from their neighbours, who brought them presents of meat, chickens, &c. They are indebted, the narrative says, to the volcano for the very materials of their buildings; for, by throwing water on the burning stones while still hot, they convert them into a tenacious and indestructible substance, which they use as mortar. They have not much rain, as there is a settled frost all through their nine months' winter. They live on wild fowl and fish, which are attracted by the

warmth of that part of the sea into which the hot water falls, and which forms a commodious harbour. The houses are built all round the hill, and are circular in form and tapering to the top, where is a little hole for light and air, the ground below supplying all necessary heat. In summer time they are visited by ships from the neighbouring islands and from Trondheim, which bring them corn, cloths, and other necessaries, in exchange for fish and skins. Some of the monks are from Norway, Sweden, and elsewhere, but most of them from Shetland. The harbour is generally full of vessels, detained by the freezing of the sea, and waiting for the spring to melt the ice. The fishermen's boats are like a weaver's shuttle; they are made of the skins of fish, and sewn together with fish-bones in such a manner that, in bad weather, the fisherman can fasten himself up in his boat and expose himself to the wind and sea without fear, for they can stand a good many bumps without receiving any injury. In the bottom of the boat is a kind of sleeve tied fast in the middle; and, when water gets into the boat, they put it into one-half of the sleeve, close it above with two pieces of wood, and loose the band beneath so that the water runs out. The friars are liberal to workmen, and to those who bring them fruit and seeds, so that many resort to them. Most of the monks, especially the principals and superiors, speak the Latin language. And this is all that is known of Engroneland, as described by Messire Niccolò Zeno.

It is a fact very well known by this time in America that, as far back as the tenth century, Greenland was colonized by emigrants from Norway, and that as far back as the eleventh century similar colonies were established in North America; but nothing of the sort was known in Venice at the time that the Zeno document was published, viz., in 1558. Even in Norway itself, at that time, the very site of the Greenland colony was so entirely forgotten that it was not known whether it had lain on the eastern or the western side of that continent; and from that time down to 1828 the kings of Denmark sent out a great number of unsuccessful expeditions with the view of finding where it was. It is true that ruins had been found more than a century ago on the south-west coast, in the district of Julianashaab; but as there had been in fact two colonies, the eastern and the western, named respectively the Ostre Bygd and the Westre Bygd, of which the former was by far the most important and the seat of the diocese, and as its name would and did lead to the supposition that it lay on the eastern coast, it was obviously impossible to decide from a few ruins of no very marked character to which of the two they belonged. It has been my good fortune to settle this question beyond all doubt by means of a Greenlandic document of a date a few years anterior to that of the brothers Zeno. In 1349, the Skrellings or Esquimaux had fallen upon the Westre Bygd, and Ivar Bardsen, a Greenlander, the author of the document to which I allude, being steward or lay justiciary to the bishopric of Gardar in the East Bygd, was sent to convey succour to the sister colony. We could not, therefore, have a better authority than he on the subject; and he has left us sailing instructions for reaching the colony from Iceland, and a chorography of the colony

itself. He tells us that, in going to the colony from Snæfeldsnaes, on the west coast of Iceland, the course is due west till you come to Gunnbjorn's Skerries, some vast rocks named after Gunnbjorn, the first of the Northmen who sighted Greenland. Ivar Bardsen says that these rocks were clogged round with the ice which had come down from the north, and it was necessary then to steer a south-west course to avoid it, after which a north-west course would bring you to Cape Hvarf, a name which means a "turning point." As such he himself treats it, for in his chorography he takes us from this point of Hvarf first eastwards to two fjords quite uninhabited, and thence further eastwards to an island named Kaarsoe, "*beyond which nothing can be seen on sea or land but ice and snow.*" He then brings us back to Hvarf, and leads us westwards, describing, *seriatim*, the different points and localities in the East Bygd, about whose names there is no manner of doubt, as several of them are mentioned in the Sagas and in other chorographies. After leading us from place to place gradually westwards to a fyord called Ericksfjord, he says, "*Northwards* from Ericksfjord are two arms of the sea, named Ydrevig and Indrevig. Next *northwards* lies Bredefjord; thence *further to the north* is Eyrarfjord, and so on to Isetjord, which is the most westerly fjord in the East Bygd." He then says that between the East and West Bygds was a space of twelve nautical miles of entirely uninhabited country, and finishes his chorography by saying that the West Bygd had been utterly depopulated by the Skrellings. Now, with this description before us, we can have no difficulty in fixing the position of the East Bygd; for, if the enumeration of places eastwards from Hvarf leads to where *nothing can be seen but ice and snow,—the characteristics of the north,*—while the enumeration of places westwards from Hvarf closes with places lying northwards and more north, it is obvious that Hvarf must occupy a southern point between the two, and consequently the East Bygd will be seen to have lain on the south-west coast of Greenland, in the very position where the ruins have been found. This mode of reasoning seems never to have occurred to any one before, but I believe the conclusion is unavoidable. It is obvious also that, if we were to suppose Hvarf to be anywhere on the east coast, the enumeration of places westward therefrom could not lead to north and more north, but, on the contrary, to south and more south; while, if we suppose Hvarf to be on the west coast, the enumeration eastwards therefrom would not terminate "where nothing could be seen on sea or land but ice and snow," but, on the contrary, in the open sea. This simple exposition is my strong point for the final settlement of the site of the East Bygd. It is surprising that an argument so conclusive should have escaped the attention of all who have sought the solution of this question, from Archbishop Walkendorf, in 1516, and the learned Torfæus downwards to the present day. Had it been discovered, the kings of Denmark would have been spared, during the last three centuries, the expense and anxiety of a considerable number of futile expeditions. The able and intrepid Captain Graah, who, in 1828, commanded the last of these expeditions, denied altogether Ivar Bardsen's statement respecting

Gunnbjorn's Skerries, and so threw discredit on his invaluable sailing directions. Not finding the rocks where Ivar Bardsen places them, midway between Iceland and Greenland, he says that "the fact is disproved, not only by the experience of the Icelandic traders and fishermen, but by that also of the English and Dutch whalers." Ivar Bardsen, however, had made no mistake, and it has been my great good fortune to make a discovery which perfectly proves his correctness. On a map of the world, by Johann Ruysch, in the 1507 edition of Ptolemy, the first engraved map which has America laid down on it, is placed midway between Iceland and Greenland an island against which stands this legend: "Insula hæc anno Domini 1456 fuit totaliter combusta." And as the volcanic destruction of this island must have left a reef, after making this discovery I proceeded to examine later charts, and found on three, of about the date of 1700, the reef laid down in precisely the same locality, with the name of "Gombar Scheer," — a sailor's version of Gunnbjorn's Skerries. The reef was sixty miles long from north to south, and about twenty-five miles broad, with soundings of twenty-five fathoms at the north and south ends. We see, then, that Ivar Bardsen is correct, and we learn from him the exact position of the Greenland colony; and if we refer to the Zeno map we shall find that it and Ivar Bardsen confirm each other, for on that map all the settlements lie on the west and none on the east side, while, in the very position where we have shown Hvarf to be, we see the word "Avorf," which is manifestly the Southerner's mode of writing the same name. With such corroborative proofs, then, of the genuineness of the Zeno story, with what interest must we turn to the account, brief as what survives of it is, of Zeno's personal observations in that country! Even though, as is not improbable, there may have been some exaggeration in the extent and degree to which the hot water of the thermal springs was turned to account in his narration, and although the volcano which he mentions (and which, by the way, is also mentioned in the same narrative as having been visited in the same locality some years afterwards by a hundred of Sinclair's soldiers) is now extinct, and thermal springs have apparently disappeared from the immediate neighborhood assumed by Professor Rafn to be the site of the monastery, yet the existence at the present day of thermal springs at Ounartok, about twenty-five miles off, is in favor of the genuineness of the Zeno story, while it is clear that no one can be answerable for the capriciousness of volcanic agencies. Then, as to the remainder of the narrative, the description of the fishermen's boats, and their contrivances for safety in those dangerous seas, is truly admirable. The mode of constructing their houses in this strange country, related to us by an eye-witness five hundred years ago, and the use of potstone — a true Greenlandic product — in their domestic utensils, have about them an interest of a very rare character.

The severity of the climate of Greenland was too much for the strength of Niccolò Zeno, and he soon returned to the Faroe Islands, where he died. Antonio, contrary to his desire, was detained in the service of Earl Sinclair for many years. The earl wished to send him

out to the westwards to verify the report of some fishermen who had discovered some rich and populous countries in that direction, which we shall presently see to be America. The narrative, which was embodied in a letter from Antonio to his brother Carlo, is in brief as follows: —

Six and twenty years ago four fishing boats put out to sea, and encountering a heavy storm were driven over the sea in utter helplessness for many days, and at length came to an island called Estotilanda, lying one thousand miles west of Frislanda. One of the boats was wrecked, and its crew of six men were brought by the natives into a large and populous city and taken before the chief, who sent for many interpreters to speak with them. Only one of these, who spoke Latin and had also been cast by chance upon the island, could understand them. On learning who they were and where they came from, the chief desired that they should stay in the country, which they did perforce for five years, and learned the language. One of them in particular having seen much of the island, reported that it was rather smaller than Iceland, but much more fertile, having in the middle a high mountain, whence flow four rivers which water the whole country. The inhabitants are very intelligent, and possess many arts. In the king's library were found several Latin books, which were not at that time understood. The people had their own language and letters, and in the south there was a great and populous country very rich in gold. Their foreign intercourse was with Engroneland, whence they imported furs, brimstone, and pitch. They sowed corn and made beer, which is "a kind of drink that north people take as we do wine." They had woods of immense extent, and many towns and villages. They built small boats and sailed them, but knew nothing of the compass. Hence these fishermen were held in high estimation, and were sent southwards with twelve boats to a country called Drogio. They arrived there after a perilous voyage; but, the inhabitants being cannibals, most of the crews were eaten. The fisherman and his companions were spared because they could catch fish with nets, and they were so much prized on this account that a neighbouring chief made war on their master to get possession of them, and, being the stronger, succeeded. In this way they spent thirteen years, being fought for and won by more than twenty-five chiefs in that time, and in the course of his wanderings the fisherman gained much information. He describes the country as very large, and, as it were, a new world, the people very rude and uncultivated. They go naked and suffer from the cold, but have not the sense to clothe themselves with skins. They live by hunting; but, as they have no metal, they use lances of wood sharpened at the point and bound with strings of hide. They fight fiercely, and afterwards eat the conquered. They have chiefs, and laws which differ in the several tribes. They grow more civilized towards the southwest, where the climate is milder, and they have cities, and temples to their idols, in which they sacrifice men and afterwards eat them. In those parts they have knowledge of gold and silver.

At last the fisherman determined, if possible, to return to his coun-

try, and finally succeeded. He worked his way to Drogio, where he stayed three years, when some boats from Estotiland came to the coast and received him on board as interpreter. Finally, he returned to Frisland, and gave an account of this important country to Sinclair.

This appears to have been, for the close of the fourteenth century, a pretty good description of the state of things in America as far down as Mexico. It is evidently a *résumé* of the knowledge acquired by the Northmen in their expeditions to the west and south-west. In addition to the information gathered by the fisherman during his own long stay in the country, he would, on his return to Greenland or Iceland, hear much from those who kept up mercantile connection with America, to add to the store of knowledge which he communicated to Sinclair.

One of the first achievements of the Greenland colonists was the discovery of North America by Lief, son of Eric the Red, in the year 1001. The tracts of country there discovered were called Helluland, *i.e.*, Slate Land, supposed to be Newfoundland; Markland, *i.e.*, Woodland, supposed to be Nova Scotia; and Vinland or Vineland. There is much uncertainty about the situation of the two former, but the site of Vinland is less problematical. One of the old writers says that on the shortest day in Vinland the sun was above the horizon from Dagmaal to Eikt; and as Dagmaal is known to have meant half-past seven o'clock, A.M., and Eikt half-past four o'clock P.M., it follows that the length of the day was nine hours, which gives the latitude of forty-one degrees. This deduction is confirmed by a curious coincidence. Adam of Bremen, writing in the eleventh century, states, on the authority of Svein Estridson, king of Denmark, a nephew of Canute the Great, that Vinland got its name from the vine growing wild there, and for the same reason the English rediscoverers gave the name of Martha's Vineyard to the large island, close off the coast, in latitude forty-one degrees, twenty-three minutes.

The old documents also mention a country called Huitramannaland or Whiteman's Land, otherwise Irland it Mikla or Great Ireland, supposed to include North and South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida. There is a tradition among the Shawanese Indians, who emigrated some years ago from Florida and settled in Ohio, that Florida was inhabited by white people who possessed iron instruments. It is further recorded in the ancient MSS., that the Greenland bishop, Erick, went over to Vinland in the year 1121, and that in 1266 a voyage of discovery to the arctic regions of America was made under the auspices of some clergymen of the Greenland bishopric. The next recorded discovery was made by Adalbrand and Thorwald Helgason, two Icelandic clergymen, in the year 1285, the country found being supposed to be Newfoundland. The last record preserved in the old Icelandic MSS. relates a voyage from Greenland to Markland, performed by a crew of seventeen men, in the year 1347. The account written by a contemporary nine years after the event speaks of Markland as a country still known and visited in those days, and it was, until now, the latest document that spoke of the maintenance of intercourse between

Greenland and America. In the Zeno document, however, we have the very latest evidence known in literature of the continued existence of that intercourse down to the close of the fourteenth century, a hundred years before the time of Columbus; for, although the valuable Codex Flatoiensis, preserved in Copenhagen, was completed at a period exactly contemporary with that of the Zeni, it does not record such late details on this interesting subject. The descriptions of the old Icelandic MSS. sufficiently explain how Latin books, which had been taken over by the priests, should be found in the chief's possession. The woods of immense extent tell their own story. The importance of catching the codfish with nets, the description of the natives and their habits, the report of a country to the south rich in gold, are points in the Zeno narrative in harmony with our present knowledge and the testimony of the Icelandic records. Perhaps the most interesting, as showing the existence of Scandinavian people and customs in America at that period, is the statement of their making beer, which, as Zeno says, is "a kind of drink that northern people take as we do wine." Of the antiquity of beer-drinking in the north, we have proof from Sœmund the Learned, who in the eleventh century made that collection of poems known as "the Poetic Edda." In the "Lay of the dwarf Alvis" occurs the expression, "Ale it is called by men, but by the Æsir (gods) biorr." In the Copenhagen Museum are horns used of old by the Vikings for drinking beer. We have already had remarkable evidence that an inflated, bombastic style may be used in the narration of a true story. When, therefore, in the description of a more remote country like America, we meet with such expressions as "the king's library" and "cities and temples," which might awaken misgivings as to the soundness of the story, we may revert to Zeno's account of the conquest of the Faroe Islands, and, recognizing the same inflated style as common to the stories, acknowledge that it would be unreasonable on that score to throw more doubt upon the one than upon the other.

It will be observed that in the Zeno narrative, "Estotiland" is described as an *island* and "Drogio" as a *country*. The former was somewhat less than "Islanda," and, as the description of it very fairly agrees with Newfoundland, the editor has here rendered the word Islanda "Iceland," and not "Shetland," as it is translated in those other parts of the narrative where the latter was obviously meant. That he is justified in this selection of the larger of the two localities bearing the name of "Islanda" in the text to meet the comparison with Newfoundland as to size, will be seen by a reference to page 34 of the text, where it is shown that the book prepared by Antonio Zeno, but torn up by Niccolò Zeno, junior, contained descriptions of *both* Iceland and Shetland, although the former is left unnoticed in the text as we now have it, which was put together from the surviving letters of the ancient voyagers. Drogio, subject to such sophistications as the word may have undergone in its perilous transmission from the tongues of Indians *viâ* the northern fisherman's repetition, to the ear of the Venetian, and its subsequent transfer to paper, appears to have been a native name for an extensive tract of North America.

At length the expedition is organized for the verification of the fisherman's statements; and, as the story of its adventures is that part of the narrative which has caused the greatest perplexity, it is here given in full: —

"Our great preparations for the voyage to Estotiland were begun in an unlucky hour; for, three days before our departure, the fisherman died who was to have been our guide; nevertheless Zichmni would not give up the enterprise, but, in lieu of the fisherman, took some sailors that had come out with him from the island. Steering westwards, we discovered some islands subject to Frislanda, and, passing certain shoals, came to Ledovo, where we stayed seven days to refresh ourselves and to furnish the fleet with necessaries. Departing thence we arrived, on the first of July, at the Island of Ilofe; and, as the wind was full in our favor, we pushed on; but not long after, when we were on the open sea, there arose so great a storm that for eight days we were continuously kept in toil, and driven we knew not where, and a considerable number of the boats were lost. At length, when the storm abated, we gathered together the scattered boats, and, sailing with a prosperous wind, we discovered land on the west. Steering straight for it, we reached a quiet and safe harbour, in which we saw an infinite number of armed people, who came running furiously down to the water side, prepared to defend the island. Zichmni now caused his men to make signs of peace to them, and they sent ten men to us who could speak ten languages, but we could understand none of them, except one that was from Shetland. He, being brought before our prince, and asked what was the name of the island, and what people inhabited it, and who was the governor, answered that the island was called Icaria, and that all the kings that reigned there were called Icari, after the first king, who, as they said, was the son of Dædalus, king of Scotland, who conquered that island, left his son there for king, and gave them those laws that they retain to the present time; that after this, when going to sail further, he was drowned in a great tempest; and in memory of his death that sea was called to this day the Icarian Sea, and the kings of the island were called Icari; that they were contented with the state which God had given them, and would neither alter their laws nor admit any stranger. They therefore requested our prince not to attempt to interfere with their laws, which they had received from that king of worthy memory, and observed up to the present time; that the attempt would lead to his own destruction, for they were all prepared to die rather than relax in any way the use of those laws. Nevertheless, that we might not think that they altogether refused intercourse with other men, they ended by saying that they would willingly receive one of our people, and give him an honorable position amongst them, if only for the sake of learning my language and gaining information as to our customs, in the same way as they had already received those other ten persons from ten different countries, who had come into their island. To all this our prince made no reply, beyond enquiring where there was a good harbour, and making signs that he intended to depart. Accordingly, sailing round about the island, he put in with all his fleet in full sail, into a harbour which he found on the eastern side. The sailors went on shore to take in wood and water, which they did as quickly as they could, for fear they might be attacked by the islanders; and not without reason, for the inhabitants made signals to their neighbours with fire and smoke, and taking to their arms, the others coming to their aid, they all came running down to the seaside upon our men, with bows and arrows, so that many were slain and several wounded. Although we made signs of peace to them, it was of no use, for their rage increased more and more, as though they were fighting for their own very existence. Being thus com-

pelled to depart, we sailed along in a great circuit about the island, being always followed on the hill-tops and along the sea-coasts by an infinite number of armed men. At length, doubling the northern cape of the island, we came upon many shoals, amongst which we were for ten days in continual danger of losing our whole fleet; but, fortunately, all that while, the weather was very fine. All the way till we came to the east cape, we saw the inhabitants still on the hill-tops and by the sea-coast, keeping with us, howling and shooting at us from a distance, to show their animosity towards us. We therefore resolved to put into some safe harbour, and see if we might once again speak with the Shetlander, but we failed in our object; for the people, more like beasts than men, stood constantly prepared to beat us back if we should attempt to come on land. Wherefore Zichmni, seeing that he could do nothing, and that, if he were to persevere in his attempt, the fleet would fall short of provisions, took his departure with a fair wind, and sailed six days to the westwards; but the wind afterwards shifting to the south-west, and the sea becoming rough, we sailed four days with the wind aft, and at length discovered land."

Icaria has been supposed by many commentators to represent some part of America. Johann Reinhold Forster was the first to suggest that it meant Kerry, and I am convinced that he was right, although for reasons that he has not adduced. The name, the point of arrival, the conduct of the natives, and the movements of the fleet after leaving the island, all lead to this conclusion. The expression in the original, "scoprimo da Ponente terra," is susceptible of two meanings, — either that they came upon an island to the westward, or upon its western side. But as when repulsed by the natives they sailed round about the island, and came into a harbour on its eastern side, it is manifest that the harbour which they first entered was on the west, and in a position corresponding exactly with Kerry.

The signals by fire and smoke, the pursuit along the hill-tops, and the howling of the strangers off the coast, are Irish all over. The sailing of the fleet six days to the westward, with a fair wind, after leaving the north point of the island without seeing land, is a fact which accords with the situation of Ireland, but not any part of America, or any other country otherwise answering the conditions.

Admiral Zahrtmann, the greatest antagonist of the Zeno narrative, says: —

"As to the fabulous parts of the narrative, it is difficult to select one passage in preference to another for refutation, the whole being a tissue of fiction."

Now it happens that there is no room for selection in the matter, for there is only one piece of fable in the whole story, and one cannot form a tissue out of a single thread. That one piece of fable (by fable, must not be understood a mere exaggerated statement of a real event) is the story of the kings of Icaria being called Icari after the first king, who was the son of Dædalus, king of Scotland, in memory of whose death by drowning that sea was called to this day the Icarian Sea. I am strongly of opinion that this excrescence on the narrative is the handiwork of Niccolò Zeno, junior, and for the following reason:

The form of the name Icaria was a very reasonable one for a Southerner to give to the Northern name of Kerry; but the Northerners, from whom Zeno received it, would be little likely to tell him such a story as that which we here have of Dædalus and the Icarian Sea, which manifestly takes its origin from the form which the word had taken under the Southerner's pen. On these grounds, I suggest the reasonableness of the conclusion, that Niccolò Zeno, junior, found in his ancestor's letter the name Icaria only, without the fable. But as during the very time that intervened between his discovery of the letters when he was a boy and his publication of them, his fellow-citizen Bordone brought out two editions of his "Isolario," in which that well-known fable is told of the island of Nicaria (*olim* Icaria) in the Ægean Sea, it seems highly probable that this suggested to his mind the grafting of the story on the name which he had found transmitted by his ancestor under the same form.

After the fleet had sailed six days to the westward from Ireland, the wind shifted to the south-west, and carried them to a harbour in Greenland. To this harbour and the headland near it they gave the name of Trin, and here Sinclair, being taken with the pureness of the atmosphere and the aspect of the country, conceived the idea of making a settlement, or, as Zeno calls it, "founding a city." As, however, his people were anxious to get home, he merely retained the row-boats, and such of the men as were inclined to stay with him, and sent all the rest away, under the command of Zeno. After twenty days' sail to the eastward and five to the south-east, he found himself on Neome, a locality which I need not trouble myself to speculate upon, and in three days reached Frisland or Thorshavn; and so ends the story, and in it we have the latest document in existence, as far as we know, giving details respecting the European settlers in North America, although a century before Columbus's great voyage across the Atlantic, and showing that they still survived at that period.

I would beg to remind the reader that this is but a *résumé* of a more elaborate work, and consequently many points may strike the reader's attention, both in the matter and in the map, which might ask for elucidation not supplied in these pages. In such cases I have no recourse but to refer him to the work itself.

British Museum, August 5, 1874.

SHELF No. .....

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